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G. A. M. WOOD

Sir Walter Scott and Sir Ralph Sadler: a Chapter in Literary History*

The literary versatility of Sir Walter Scott needs no introduction. Even if Scott had never been a novelist, or a poet, he would have made a considerable reputation as historian, antiquarian, critic and literary editor. The amount of Scott's non-creative literary work is prodigious. The *Miscellaneous Prose Works*, Edinburgh 1834-36, for example, fill twenty-eight volumes: Scott's 1808 edition of Dryden extends to eighteen large volumes and the 1814 *Swift* was completed in nineteen. Between these major editions of Dryden and Swift, apart from publishing *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), *The Vision of Don Roderick* (1811), *Rokeby* (1813), and writing part of *The Lord of the Isles*, *The Bridal of Triermain* and *Waverley*, Scott produced editions of the *Memoirs of Robert Cary* (1808), *Captain Carleton's Memoirs* (1808), *The Secret History of the Court of James I* (1811), *Somers's Tracts* (in thirteen volumes between 1809 and 1812). He also completed Joseph Strutt's novel *Queenbooh-Hall* (1808), and was responsible for the Introduction, notes and completion of *The State Papers of Sir Ralph Sadler* (1809).

A study of Scott's editorial "factory," as it might be called today, would be an interesting if extensive project. Even if allowances are made for the loose standards of his time in textual matters, Scott could not have produced, unaided, so many books in so few years. Much of the drudgery of copying, proof reading and correcting fell on Henry Weber, George Huntly Gordon and his other amanuenses. This article will be concerned with the strange history of *The State Papers of Sir Ralph Sadler*,¹ one of Scott's least remembered publications. Lockhart,

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¹*The State Papers and Letters of Sir Ralph Sadler, Knight—Banneret. Edited by Arthur Clifford, Esq.—To Which is added a Memoir of the Life of Sir Ralph Sadler, with Historical Notes, by Walter Scott, Esq., 2 vols.* (Edinburgh, 1809), referred to as *Sadler*. The work was also published in a limited three-volume edition, but all references are to the two-volume edition.

of course, praised his father-in-law's contributions to the edition,² but the *Edinburgh Review*, in an acid article, noted of the book "that its inaccuracy is still more remarkable than its beauty; and that the whole publication bears marks of great negligence and precipitancy on the part of all concerned."³ In this paper I shall offer some new letters to and from Scott dealing with the prepublication vicissitudes of *Sadler*, and show how they illuminate Scott's editorial methods in one of the busiest periods of his life. In reconstructing the history of *Sadler* I shall examine Scott's abilities and quirks as an editor, reveal the help he requested and received from friends and outside sources, and look at the care taken in seeing the completed work through the press.

That Scott would have found Sir Ralph Sadler an attractive subject for his pen is easily explained. Sadler, who was sent on repeated diplomatic missions to Scotland by King Henry VIII, was considered to be Henry's Scottish expert.⁴ Sadler was concerned, throughout his career, with the English interest in Mary, Queen of Scots, and shortly before his death was one of the official guardians of her captivity. His life, indeed, had already suggested an incident to Scott's poetic imagination, for the idea of Marmion taking refuge in Tantallon Castle was prompted by the story of Sadler's retiring there in obedience to King Henry's orders in 1543.⁵ Scott had already traversed the historical background in the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, 1802, and he regarded *Sadler* as a work of a few hours.

Two interesting and unreconciled defences of his miscellaneous literary work are found in letters from Scott during the period he was actively engaged on *Sadler*. The first is in a letter to Lady Abercorn, Edinburgh, 13 March 1808:

You ask me why I do not rather think of original production than editing the works of others—Now after writing a work of imagination one feels [in] nearly the same exhausted state with the spider. I believe no man now alive writes more rapidly than I do (no great recommendation), but I never think of making verses till I have a sufficient stock of poetical ideas to supply them.— Besides I know as a small farmer that good husbandry consists in not taking the same crop too frequently from the same soil and

² J. G. Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.*, 7 vols. (Edinburgh, 1837-38), II, 256. This book is cited as Lockhart.

³ *Edinburgh Review*, XVI (August 1810), 461.

⁴ For comments on Sadler as a diplomatist, see H.M.C. report on the MSS. of Allan George Finch, Vol. I (London, 1913), p. 7. The best modern study of Sadler is A. J. Slavin, *Politics and Profit, A Study of Sir Ralph Sadler, 1507-1547* (Cambridge, 1966).

⁵ Note to *Marmion*, Canto V, xv, l.15, Note LXXI.

as turnips come after wheat according to the best rules of agriculture I take it that an edition of Swift will do well after such a scourging crop as Marmion.⁶

A less attractive excuse is given in a letter, dated from Edinburgh 16 June 1808, to another close friend, Lady Louisa Stuart: "It is not with my inclination that I fag for the booksellers; but what can I do? My poverty and not my will consents. The income of my office is only reversionary, and my private fortune much limited."⁷ Scott's first justification of himself is the more illuminating. Throughout his life his overworked imagination found relief in the reassurance of fact. Scott thought his poems and novels would merely provide fanciful pleasure for their readers: it is therefore a paradox that he found a release from the pains of composition in the mundane certainty of historical research. The historical and editorial labours of this time, as it happened, were to bear fruit in fiction. Scott's superb and instant command of historical knowledge gave him the advantage of material over his imitators in the historical novel—"They may do their fooling with better grace; but I, like Sir Andrew Aguecheek, do it more natural. They have to read old books and consult antiquarian collections to get their information; I write because I have long since read such works, and possess, thanks to a strong memory, the information which they have to seek for."⁸

The *Sadler Papers* were advertised as being edited by Arthur Clifford, and a point less easily explained is Scott's first connection with the edition. Arthur Clifford (1778-1830), an antiquary of independent means, was the sixth son of the Hon. Thomas Clifford of Tixall Hall, Staffordshire. At the time of the edition Tixall was the seat of Arthur Clifford's eldest brother, Thomas Hugh Clifford. Sir Ralph Sadler's manuscripts had descended to the family of Lord Aston, into which his great grand-daughter had married. These manuscripts were kept at Standon House, and when it was sold in 1767, the papers and family pictures were removed to Tixall, the ancient seat of the Astons. Here, according to the printed account, "these papers remained undisturbed till a few years ago, when they were faithfully copied by the Reverend John Kirk of Litchfield. From this copy, accurately compared with the originals, this work is now printed."⁹ Kirk (1760-1851), Clifford's copyist, a Catholic divine and antiquary, undertook the task of decipher-

⁶ *Letters*, II, 31-32.

⁷ *Letters*, II, 73.

⁸ J. G. Tait, *Sir Walter Scott's Journal* (Edinburgh, 1950), p. 248, cited as *Journal*. See also Lockhart, II, 256.

⁹ "Advertisement" to *Sadler*, I, 7.

ing, copying and preparing the state papers for publication about 1794. Despite the optimism of the "Advertisement," Kirk was a poor transcriber. Mistakes were so profuse that the *Edinburgh Review* called one page "unintelligible gibberish," and wrote "we can detect such a number of palpable blunders, as to produce a very uncomfortable feeling of distrust and insecurity with regard to the accuracy of almost every doubtful and important passage."¹⁰

So we find that the "editor," Arthur Clifford, employed someone to do the transcribing, and persuaded someone else to do the notes and see the volume through the press. The circumstances of Scott's original involvement with Clifford are obscure, and they never again collaborated. Lockhart merely tells us that Scott's "engagement with London publishers respecting the Somers and the Sadler, were, I believe, entered into before the end of 1807."¹¹ There is no mention of Sadler in the letters from William Miller in the Walpole Letterbooks of letters to Scott, and the first reference to *Sadler* in Scott's letters is in a letter to Archibald Constable the publisher in the autumn of 1806. Scott asks, "Is there any news of Mr. Cliffords grande opus?"¹²

A few items from Clifford occur in the Walpole *Letterbooks* and they are notable for their formality. It is probable, however, that the first connection was verbal. Scott and Clifford were next door neighbours in Edinburgh while *Sadler* was in progress.¹³ The "Advertisement" to the book is dated from Clifford's address, even though it takes over much of the wording of Scott's letter to Clifford, 5 April 1809, quoted below. Scott had already demonstrated his passionate interest in state papers, and even in 1806 his name on a title page contributed a powerful aid towards selling the book. The Ballantyne press was accustomed to undertake complicated antiquarian works, and Clifford's next volume, *Tixall Poetry* was published by Ballantyne and Longman in 1813, despite James Ballantyne's earlier fears of a severe financial loss. "The review of Sadler has thrown a heavy cloud over the Aston

¹⁰ *Edinburgh Review* (Edinburgh, August 1810), Vol. XVI, 461.

¹¹ Lockhart, II, 170.

¹² *Letters*, I, 336. Grierson dates this as late November 1806, but from evidence of other letters in NLS MS 742, it is more likely to have been written in September 1806.

¹³ *Edinburgh Post Office Directory* for 1808-9 and 1809-10 lists "Clifford, Arthur esq 3. north Castle street." No. 2, north Castle Street, renumbered about 1812 as 39, Castle Street, was Scott's Edinburgh home between 1802 and 1826.

Speculation. In fact, it seems to me to have ruined it. Here is the same editor, the same printer, and your name withdrawn."¹⁴

Clifford, then, as titular editor, was responsible for furnishing Kirk's copy of his family papers to the press, though we shall see how *Sadler* was eked out into two volumes by the addition of superfluous previously printed material. Scott was primarily responsible for the biographical memoir and for the historical footnotes, though he came to assume responsibility for much else. The frequent references to *Sadler* in Scott's letters enable us to look into his working methods. These references fall into two main kinds. Firstly we find Scott writing to his close friends for help and information; secondly correspondences arise from unsolicited letters from strangers, proffering assistance.

A number of Scott's requests were of a purely official nature, as for example Letter I which is of a kind familiar to anyone who has had to write footnotes.

Letter I. [fragment] ¹⁵.

Scott to Sir Henry Ellis,¹⁶ Edinburgh, 5 October [1807].

p. 375 No 121 R Sadler to Cromwell Orders from the King "two original letters" Richmond

Calig. B. I. from p. 52 to 70. Instructions to Sir Ralph Sadler concerning an embassy to Scotland. See Pinkertons histy. of Scotland Vol 2d. p. 374 Note ¹⁷

¹⁴ AL, initialled "JB", James Ballantyne to Scott, Edinburgh, 15 Sept. 1810. NLS MS 3879 ff 189-190. Part of this letter was printed, in a garbled and shortened version, in Lockhart, II, 332. The major part omitted in Lockhart deals with Ballantyne's apology for the proofreading of *Sadler*.

¹⁵ National Library of Scotland MS 1750 f.68. This manuscript contains material which came to hand too late to be included in Grierson's *Letters*. It is a copy, in an unknown hand, with no provenance given, of a letter to Sir Henry Ellis at the British Museum, Edinburgh, 5 October 1807. The letter is noted as 3pp, 4to, signed in full. At least a page of the original seems to be missing from the transcription now in Edinburgh, here printed for the first time.

¹⁶ Sir Henry Ellis (1777-1869) became principal librarian of the British Museum. At the time of Scott's letter Ellis was head of the department of printed books, and was not transferred to the department of manuscripts till 1812.

¹⁷ Scott is citing Joseph Planta, *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library* (London, 1802). The first item is MS Titus B 1 121/375 "Rafe Sadleyr to Tho. Cromwell, privy seal; orders from the king." This Cromwell material was used by Scott in his Introduction to *Sadler*, especially pages iii-v, but is from Titus B 1, f.343. The second item quoted by Scott from Planta's *Catalogue*, is MS Caligula B I Nos 29-30, ff 52-70, "Copy of Henry VIIIth's instructions to Sir Ralph Sadler, on his being sent to Scotland, to caution James Vth against the Pope. Feb 1540?—" It is printed in *Sadler*, I, 50-56, as the Instructions given for the 1541 mission to Scotland.

Whatever expense may attend these transcripts¹⁸ I will make good with great pleasure & my best thanks. My friend Mr Rose¹⁹ will perhaps be so good as to settle this matter for me.

I cannot but hope that the purpose of this work being an addition to the stock of historical documents you will find some pleasure in contributing to its completion. We have the originals or copies in Sir Ralphs hand of most of his other letters mentioned in the Catalogue; at least so far as I have been able to trace them. I am Sir with many apologies for this freedom.

Your most obedient Servant

Walter Scott

Edin. 5 October [1807]

The copies should be made in a distinct hand on one side of the paper only & without beginning a new letter or document on the page where another is concluded.

[the address has been transcribed]

Care of W. S. Rose Esq

_____ Ellis Esquire

British Museum

The most frequent references to *Sadler* by Scott are in his letters to Robert Surtees of Mainsforth, 1779-1834.²⁰ Scott had come to know Surtees some years previously, when editing the *Minstrelsy*. He announced his *Sadler* project in a letter of 12 June 1807,²¹ adding that in *Marmion* "I have availed myself of your curious old ballad of the Featherstonehaugh feud." This ballad, "Death of Featherstonehaugh," incorporated into *Marmion*, and printed in full with a commentary in the Notes,²² was in fact a spurious verse of Surtees' own composition—an imposture not divulged until after Surtees' death.

Perhaps pricked by conscience, Surtees served Scott more honestly over *Sadler* and responded amply to the request "—to profit by your

¹⁸ See also the postscript to Letter I. Scott asked for legible transcripts which could go straight to the printer. In *Sadler* several notes, concerning the Tixall documents, mention whose handwriting the letters are in: these must be Kirk's notes, incorporated by Scott.

¹⁹ William Stewart Rose (1775-1843) was a poet and translator. For details of Scott's friendship with Rose, see W. F. Gray, *Scott in Sunshine and Shadow* (London, 1931), Chapter V.

²⁰ For an account of Surtees see Mrs. F. A. MacCunn, *Sir Walter Scott's Friends* (Edinburgh, 1909), Chapter IV.

²¹ *Letters*, I, 364-366.

²² *Marmion*, Canto I, Stanza XIII. For the Note see Oxford Standard Authors, Scott, p. 178, Note XII.

assistance in the task I have undertaken, of adding a few notes of occasional illustration."²³ Scott provided his friend with a long plan of the proposed edition, a plan which corresponded closely with the printed book, and in one instance, to be dealt with later, was more forthright than *Sadler* over the nature of its copy text. He then asked Surtees for help in a specific area:

the last part of the collection refers to the part which Sadler had in the confinement of Queen Mary in Tutbury Castle. Some of these last letters appear in the Shrewsbury Collection, published under the inspection of Mr. Lodge, in 3 vols, 4to.²⁴ Will you be so good as to consider whether you would like to look over these letters, at least such as are connected with Northumberland, and in what way they will reach you safely. I mean to send the copies, as the originals remain with Mr. Clifford."²⁵

Surtees obviously accepted an offer so congenial to his main interests, for Scott wrote to him on 28 July 1807, "I willingly embrace your obliging offer of looking through Sir Ralph Sadler's letters during the Great Northern Rebellion"²⁶ Surtees' notes were sent to Scott on 29 February 1808, and were acknowledged on 4 April 1808, with the remark, "—After all, that part of Sadler's Letters will owe to you all that is curious in the illustrations. I heartily wish the whole had been under your management, as I am certain you would have done them much more justice than is in my power."²⁷ In the same letter Scott again asked for help, this time concerning "such passages [from the Lansdowne papers] as may tend to throw new light on the state of the North in Queen Elizabeth's reign."²⁸ In his reply, dated from London on 8 April, 1808, Surtees promised to send "an entire copy of two letters of the Bishop of Durham," though the transcripts were not sent north till February 1809. Surtees continued, "I do not know yr Sadler Materials—but I can send you a list & abstract of such pieces as seem interesting—Let me know how I am to proceed & I will be yr faithful pioneer for 6 weeks to come."²⁹

²³ *Letters*, I, 364.

²⁴ Edmund Lodge, *Illustrations of British History—containing a great part of the correspondence of Elizabeth and her ministers, with George, the sixth Earl of Shrewsbury, during the fifteen years in which Mary Queen of Scots remained in his custody*:—3 vols. (London, 1791).

²⁵ *Letters*, I, 365.

²⁶ *Letters*, I, 371.

²⁷ *Letters*, II, 37.

²⁸ *Letters*, II, 37.

²⁹ NLS MS 3877, ff 13, 14. In *Sadler*, II, note to pp. 95&96, Scott prints a letter, transcribed by Surtees from the Lansdowne Collection, by Bishop Pilkington of London about the dreadful condition of the north of England.

These exchanges between Scott and Surtees show how much Scott relied on his friend for grubbing in libraries. We also see that his standards of consistent editorial commentary were less than rigorous;—some passages would be explained by a sentence, others would call forth pages of documents in explication. This looseness is not surprising, for Scott's letter of 4 April 1808 also tells of his newly projected Highland poem and his fertile brain was always evolving and starting on new projects, even before present ones were properly underway.

Consequently we find Scott, in his next letter to Surtees, written late April 1808, expressing uncertainty about his procedure for editing *Sadler*. "There would be no end of publishing everything relative to the period, nor is it perhaps desirable, where so much depends on minute accuracy, that state papers should be printed where the proof-sheets cannot be collated with the originals before their being thrown off."³⁰ Even so he asked for still more information about papers in the Cotton MSS, and one of the items cited, Cotton Titus B.I, No 48, p. 153, a letter from Henry Sadler to his son, was printed on p.iii of Scott's introductory biographical memoir.

In his references to Cotton manuscripts, Scott cited, though in a rather haphazard way, Joseph Planta's *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library* (London, 1802). The entry in Planta for Titus B.I, No 48 is "Hen. Sadleyer, to his son Rauf, living with Mr. Cromwell; concerning some demands, and private concerns.—Ciltey, Dec. 16,"³¹ and the search for the elusive "Ciltey" and its hint as to the status of Sadler's father caused Scott much wasted effort. The question at first seemed easy, as he told Surtees, "The letter from Sir Ralph's father argues that he was a man of inferior rank; probably only a steward or auditor to the proprietor of Cilney, whom I trust to discover when I go to Edinburgh."³²

Scott duly went to Edinburgh, but did not discover the "proprietor of Cilney," for in a letter to William Hayley, 7 June, 1808, first printed below, he wrote of his perplexity in finding no record of "Cillney near Great Hadham." However, in writing the account of Sadler, Scott forgot or buried his doubts, and settled Henry Sadler as a "steward or surveyor to a nobleman, proprietor of a manor called Cillney, near Great Hadham, in Essex."³³ This, unfortunately, is nonsense, and the best modern account of Sir Ralph Sadler shows how Scott was mistaken in his assumptions about Sadler's father, as Henry Sadler was a man trusted with

³⁰ *Letters*, II, 53.

³¹ Planta, p. 517.

³² *Letters*, II, 61. dated 2 May 1808.

³³ *Sadler*, biographical memoir, I, ii.

government money and business.³⁴ Scott indeed had found out his error, but too late to revise his text. Surtees wrote to him on 2 September 1809, that

in turning over an old edition of ye Magna Britannia [it seems] that ye seat of Sadlers Master in Essex may probably be *Tilley-Abbey* in ye Hundred of Dunmow near Thaxted & not very far from *Hadham* in Essex. I am ye rather inclined to think that this may be ye fact because in an old MSS Villare wh[ich] I have by me (merely a copy of Adams Villare)³⁵ I find it *Tilley al[so]* *Jiltey wh[ich]* comes near enough to *Ciltey* or *Cilney*.³⁶

Surtees' information was acknowledged on 17 September 1809.

Your obliging favour reached me I fear too late to be of any use to Sadler, although it leaves me now no doubt that the abode of his father was that same *Tiltey Abbey*, which your industry has detected in the neighbourhood of *Hadham* in Essex. But I fear this little spark of light must remain *entre nous*, and the world continue in darkness, for Sadler is at length out of the printer's hands.³⁷

On 14 February 1809 Surtees sent Scott a very long letter which he admitted "ought to have reached you at least 8 months ago," enclosing the two letters of the Bishops of Durham requested and promised in April 1808. In this letter³⁸ we can see something of Scott's method of preparing his text for the press, as he copiously annotated the transcriptions.

The first item was a letter from Dr. Matthew Hutton, Bishop of Durham, to Lord Burleigh, Auckland, 11 December 1594, taken from the Lansdowne manuscripts, Vol. 76, No. 90. Scott annotated it as follows:

Dr. Matthew Hutton "a famous & worthie prelate" as Sir John Harrington calls him was translated from Durham to York shortly after this letter was written. He died aged eighty in 1605. He was remarkable for venturing to preach in the Queens Chapel on the subject of the succession shewing from the Vision of Daniel that the expectations of all men went northwards which said he if "it prove an error it will be found a learnd error". The Queen heard this trying discussion without apparent emotion but faild not to send the prelate a rebuke for his boldness in private.

³⁴ See Slavin, *op. cit.* p. 11. Slavin shows that Henry Sadler was a steward of the Dorset family, since Titley was their head manor in Essex.

³⁵ John Adams, *Index Villaris; or an Alphabetical Table of all the Cities, market-townes, parishes, villages, and private seats, in England and Wales*, (London, 1680), often reprinted and revised.

³⁶ NLS MS 3878 f. 136, partly printed in *Letters*, II, 245.

³⁷ *Letters*, II, 245.

³⁸ NLS MS 3878 ff 22-24.

The second item, from Tobie Matthews, Bishop of Durham, to Lord Burleigh, Bishop Auckland, 27 May 1598, from the same manuscript, no.16, was footnoted by Scott on a separate piece of paper, numbered p.a. and stuck on to the upper outer corner of the letter.

Tobias Matthews was like his predecessor translated from Durham to York. Harrington applies to him Mores commendation of Cuthbert Tunstal his predecessor that as there was no man more adorned with knowledge & good literature no man of greater integrity for his life & manners so there was no man a more sweet & pleasant companion. Yet the prelates constructions in this letter argue a narrow spirit & want of charity.

The transcriptions, with Scott's annotations, were then docketed for the press. Surtees's text was sent to the printer, and part of his letter to Scott forms a footnote. Scott's annotations appear in small type, and the whole forms Item IV, No. II, in *Sadler*, Volume II, 202-207. The last line of the 1594 letter was changed to read "failed not privately to send the prelate," and the precise location of the letters in the Lansdowne Manuscripts was suppressed.

It only remained for Scott to thank his friend in the usual way. "Your very kind letter reached me—in ample time to make use of the curious letter which it included, and which now makes a part of the Appendix to Sir Ralph Sadler. I hope the worthy Knight's Correspondence will be soon before the public, and I will take care that you have an early copy."³⁹

One of the earliest unsolicited letters about *Sadler* came from Henry White, cousin of Anna Seward and Sacrist of Lichfield Cathedral. He wrote on 27 November 1807 pressing that a portrait in his collection should be reproduced for the volume.⁴⁰ Nothing seems to have come of his request, but White was rewarded with his name printed in the "Advertisement" to *Sadler* I.

(To be continued)

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³⁹ *Letters*, II, 174-175, dated 4 March 1809.

⁴⁰ NLS MS 3876 ff 129-131.